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U.S. Aides Liked Shah's Army Rule

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TEHRAN, Iran — Several prominent Americans enthusiastically praised the establishment of a military government by the shah last November, and even cautioned about returning too rapidly to civilian rule, according to a highly confidential document.

They included President Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, CIA chief Stansfield Turner, Henry Kissinger and Nelson Rockefeller, the document said. The paper's authenticity has been confirmed by Iranian Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yazdi.

In the document, a 24-page, meticulously prepared handwritten report to the shah by the then-Iranian ambassador to Washington, Ardeshir Zahedi, the envoy quotes Brzezinski's reaction to the establishment of the military regime.

"At 4:30 pm yesterday ... Brzezinski called me and said, 'My congratulations, it was a very good decision, and it came at an opportune time. I understand from reading the (message) traffic that the British ambassador has warned the shah about some consequences. ...'"

In his report Zahedi quoted Brzezinski as asking, "Do you want us to make a statement?" Zahedi reported that he had suggested that "perhaps after his majesty's scheduled message (to the nation) the U.S. could express the view that after this chaos it was a necessary and useful measure."

All of this was a reaction to the establishment of a military government under the former armed forces chief of staff, Gen. Golam Reza Azhari, after a series of demonstrations and strikes and a night in which throngs burned theaters, banks, restaurants and government ministries.

Zahedi's report, which is undated but from internal evidence was written Nov. 5, has circulated in Tehran for some time but was not widely quoted because of doubts about its authenticity.

After expressing his satisfaction at the shah's decision, Zahedi wrote that Brzezinski continued, "I hope you won't fix a definitive date to replace the military government with a civilian one because in that case your hands will be tied."

"This is good news," Zahedi quotes Brzezinski as saying. "We shall inform the president immediately."

Though the British ambassador's comments are not discussed in detail, that meeting also was mentioned by Rockefeller who, according to Zahedi, "telephoned personally to congratulate me on the establishment of the military government." Rockefeller said the British ambassador emphasized to the shah the need for a coalition government and "lectured on history."

Independent reporting confirms that immediately before dissolving the civilian cabinet and establishing a military regime, the shah called in U.S. Ambassador William H. Sullivan and British Ambassador Sir Anthony D. Parsons to ask their views. Parsons was widely considered the most able analyst in the diplomatic corps.

According to unimpeachable sources here, Parsons told the shah, "I would not have commented, but ... precedent shows that a military solution, after a revolution is as advanced as this, does not work."

The American ambassador, on the contrary, told the shah that "the opposition has failed to seize an excellent opportunity in your generous offer, and deserves a takeover by a military government." The shah had offered his critics several relatively minor concessions, which were treated with scorn.

Further in the Zahedi document, which was passed to the shah by his Special Bureau chief, Nosratollah Moinian, Zahedi reports that, "I talked with Admiral Turner (chief of the CIA). He believes the National Front (an umbrella political organization of several liberal democratic parties) has behaved stupidly. He said the front leaders were a bunch of snobs to turn down the shah's generous offer."

Zahedi then records that "I talked with Kissinger on the phone" and Kissinger was "happy at the news." Zahedi quotes Kissinger as describing the establishment of a military cabinet under Azhari as "the best decision his majesty has made, and if he had made it earlier perhaps there would have been fewer difficulties."

Asked recently about the Zahedi comments reported in this document, Kissinger did not question its validity, but challenged the accuracy of Zahedi's reporting.

Zahedi concludes his report by saying that he had been at a "private dinner" with a Senator "Wasserman" (the transliteration from Zahedi's writing in farsi is unclear), Carter administration official Robert S. Strauss and Sen. Abraham Ribicoff. Zahedi continued, "Ribicoff said Sen. (Howard) Baker ... asked Ribicoff to inform his majesty that he would be a hundred percent at his majesty's service and would not spare any effort to help."

"Ribicoff talked a long time on the personality of (the shah), his leadership, the measures he has taken and the importance of Iran. He deliberately did so for the benefit of Strauss, special adviser to the president."